

[From the Salyersville Independent, July 3, 2014]

JOINS GUARD FOR WORK, SENT TO
AFGHANISTAN

(By Heather Oney)

Gregory Scott Salyer joined the Army National Guard in Prestonsburg in 2006, serving until 2011.

The former Magoffin County High School student said he was having a hard time finding a job, so at the age of 24 he decided to enlist, following in his dad's, uncles' and grandfathers' footsteps.

Salyer served one tour in Afghanistan, working in route clearance. His crew, which included five other men from Magoffin, tracked, dug up and disposed of improvised explosive devices (IEDs). While he said he was hit once, he came home without any injuries.

"I would rather go back than sit here," Salyer said. "Everything was simple. You trained for a job, then you went out and did your job. You would get up the next day and do it all, again."

Salyer said growing up around guns helped him get ready for his time overseas.

"I had been around guns my whole life and been shot at while coming," Salyer laughed. "You could tell these boys from California with stricter gun laws were not used to it, but us country people were used to doing hard work every now and then."

Salyer received the National Defense Medal, Global War on Terrorism Medal, Armed Forces Reserve Medal, Afghanistan Campaign Medal, ARCOM Medal of Valor, and Whitelist recognition.

He has one son, Hunter Salyer.

TRIBUTE TO BARRY E. OWENS

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I rise today to pay tribute to one of Kentucky's proud military veterans—Barry E. Owens. Owens hails from Magoffin County, and served his country with honor in the Vietnam war.

Although millions of young Americans were drafted into service during this time, Barry decided to leave nothing to chance and volunteer. He served in the U.S. Army from 1968 until 1970, achieving the rank of specialist 4.

In 1969, he was deployed to Vietnam with the 2nd and 35th Regiments of the 4th Infantry Division. In a time when the war became increasingly unpopular, Owens always retained his sense of duty. "I served my country with pride and honor," he said.

Owens is a member of Veterans of Foreign Wars and the Salyersville chapter of the Disabled American Veterans. His commitment to this country is worthy of praise from this body. Therefore, I ask that my Senate colleagues join me in honoring Barry Owens.

The Salyersville Independent recently published an article detailing Specialist Owens's service in Vietnam. I ask unanimous consent that the full article be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the article was ordered to be printed in the RECORD as follows:

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OWENS VOLUNTEERS FOR DRAFT, GOES TO
VIETNAM

(By Heather Oney)

Barry E. Owens, born and raised in Roy-alton, Magoffin County, volunteered for the

draft during the Vietnam War in 1968 with the U.S. Army, climbing to the rank of Specialist 4 by the time he was discharged in 1970.

He attended basic training at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, then advanced training for supply specialist and armory school at Fort Lee, Virginia.

From 1969 until discharged, Owens served in Vietnam with the 2nd and 35th Regiment 4th Infantry Division.

After a few days upon reporting, Owens's company commander decided that for the next year he would be a better fit as an 11 Bravo Infantry soldier, working "out in the boonies," as opposed to sitting around an office in a base camp.

Owens said he can remember the soldiers lining up in a field to get their hair cut by Vietnamese civilians. Since there was no electricity, they had to use the hand clippers where you have to squeeze them to make them work. His sergeant was in line and getting impatient.

"I told him I was a barber before going into the military," Owens laughed. "So I started at the back of his head and came out with a half moon, and that's where I stopped. I threw the clippers and ran. The next time I saw him his head was shaven. I think that's when they started shaving heads."

Owens was stationed in the Central Highlands of Vietnam, including areas around Pleiku, Kon Tum City, Buon Me Thuot, and many firebases in this region, including VC Valley and areas on the border of Cambodia and Laos.

"The Vietnam veterans returning home from this country were not greeted and welcomed home with parades or such fanfare," Owens remembers. "Many of us were met at airports with degrading slurs, cursed and spat upon."

It would be another 20 years before the Veterans Administration would acknowledge Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and other disabilities and afford medical care to this era of veterans. Many Vietnam veterans fell into drug and alcohol abuse, often even resulting in homelessness, with many committing suicide and dying at an early age.

"I served my country with pride and honor," Owens said.

He is a life member of the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW), and the Disabled American Veterans (DAV) Chapter 15 Salyersville. He has been married to his wife, Shirley, for over 20 years and has three daughters, Melissa, Misty, and Jennifer.

CONGRATULATING REVEREND SAMUEL C. TOLBERT

Ms. LANDRIEU. Mr. President, I ask my colleagues to join me in congratulating Rev. Samuel Tolbert, pastor of the Greater St. Mary's Missionary Baptist Church in Lake Charles, LA, on his recent election as the 15th president of the National Baptist Convention of America, Inc.

Rev. Samuel C. Tolbert, Jr. was born August 1, 1958 in Lake Charles, LA and graduated from Washington High school in 1976. A graduate of Bishop College in Dallas, he earned his bachelors of arts in religion and philosophy with a minor in speech education. He has also received an honorary doctorate of divinity from Union Baptist College and Theological Seminary and a masters from Payne Theological Seminary. He is currently pursuing a doctorate in ministry at Stephen

Olford Center at Union University in Memphis, TN.

Reverend Tolbert is a recognized civic leader. He served as a commissioner for the Lake Charles Housing Authority, a representative of District "A" on Lake Charles City Council, and as a member of the board of the Louisiana Economic Development Corporation. Currently, Reverend Tolbert serves on the board of supervisors for the Southern University System.

A devout man of faith, Reverend Tolbert has dedicated himself to a life of religious servitude. He has presided over Greater Saint Mary Missionary Baptist Church since 1984. Reverend Tolbert has held a number of positions in the faith community including serving as first vice president of the Southwest Missionary Baptist Association, president of the Louisiana Home & Foreign Missions Baptist State Convention, and general secretary National Baptist Convention of America Inc. Reverend Tolbert currently serves as president of Greater St. Mary Community Development Foundation, the president & CEO Strategic Faith Leadership Ministries, and as the coordinator of disaster relief North America for Lott Carey Baptist Foreign Mission Convention.

Reverend Tolbert's accomplishments reflect his dedication to his faith, education and service. On June 25, 2014, he was elected the president of the National Baptist Convention of America. With over 3.5 million members worldwide, the National Baptist Convention of America is an organization that seeks to "positively impact and influence the spiritual, educational, social, and economic conditions of all humankind".

It is with the greatest sincerity that I ask my colleagues to join me in recognizing Rev. Samuel Tolbert Jr. for his accomplishments as an incredible reverend, father, and mentor. His wife Matilda, and their two daughters Candace and Kayla must be extremely proud and I know that he will serve the National Baptist Convention well.

HONORING OUR ARMED FORCES

PRIVATE JOHN P. DION

Mr. INHOFE. Mr. President, I wish to pay tribute Army PVT John P. Dion. Private Dion and two other soldiers died January 3, 2010 when insurgents attacked their unit with improvised explosive devices and small arms fire in Ashoq, Afghanistan.

John was born February 4, 1990 in Tarzana, CA and moved to Oklahoma during his sophomore year in high school. He joined the Army in June 2009 after graduating from high school in Shattuck, OK where he was on the baseball and football teams.

Upon graduating from basic training at Fort Benning, GA, John was assigned to the 1st Battalion, 12th Infantry Regiment, 4th Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, Fort Carson, CO. He was deployed to Afghanistan in November 2009.